

THE POSTAL CONGRESS

What Has Been and Is to Be Accomplished by the Nations.

MR. KASSON'S GREAT SERVICES

A History of the First International Congress and What It Has Led Up To—Uniform Postal Rates Established—The Many Improvements Which Are Necessary.

Although to Germany belongs the honor of calling the first postal conference, which resulted in forming a universal postal union, the United States can justly claim to have been the pioneer in international postal reforms, and at the first conference, held at her request at Paris in the spring of 1863, to have opened the way for the splendid accomplishments in the improvement of the postal laws that have marked the last thirty-five years.

In view of the fact that the fifth congress is now in session here the story of that first conference cannot fail to be of interest. It was called directly through the influence of Mr. John A. Kasson, at the time Postmaster General, and to him more than any American the important part the United States has played in the postal history of the world is due.

The nomination of Mr. Kasson to be first Assistant Postmaster General was the second name sent to the Senate for confirmation, that of Norman D. Judge, the President's old and tried friend, as minister to Prussia, being the first, after the inauguration of Mr. Lincoln, and to no one was his appointment a greater surprise than to Mr. Kasson himself. He took up the work of his new position, however, with the deep interest and enthusiasm that has characterized all of his public service, and at once set about learning the details of his official duties, a difficult matter at that crucial time when the internal affairs of the country were in a chaotic state. The most pressing duty that confronted him was that of changing the postmaster, made the more necessary by the number of disloyal men holding office at the outbreak of the war.

This business having been disposed of, Mr. Kasson turned his attention to the general improvement of the postal service. He found much difficulty in mastering the great variety of regulations and laws governing the interior postal service, and undertook to simplify and render them uniform, with the result of preparing a code eliminating obsolete and harmonizing conflicting laws and regulations. Having prepared this code, and placed the interior postal affairs, then characterized by 10-cent rates to the Pacific coast, and different newspaper rates to different parts of the country on a simple basis, he turned his attention to foreign postage, which was quite as complicated and troublesome. In some instances more complicated and troublesome than was that of our interior postal service.

At that time we had different rates to each separate country. There were, too, transit charges through intermediate countries to be paid, and the postmaster, complicated in the extreme kept with foreign nations, resulted in a balance against us. When our money became depreciated we were compelled to pay these balances in gold, and it cost the Government somewhere between \$300,000 and \$400,000 every year to meet the amount due from our department to foreign departments.

The embarrassment of the citizen in sending a letter abroad was such, owing to the different and conflicting rates, that he had invariably to go to the postoffice with his letter in his hand to inquire of the postmaster what the rate was to its destination. This was an intolerable condition, and, after reflecting upon it, Mr. Kasson called Postmaster General Blair's attention to the necessity of some reforms in our foreign postal regulations, at the same time submitting to him a plan for an international conference, as the most direct and only speedy means of arriving at the reform of the system. Postmaster General Blair spent some time in looking into this project, and finally authorized the conference. Mr. Kasson immediately prepared a letter to be sent by Mr. Seward to foreign countries, inviting them to participate in an international conference.

In due time answers came from a majority of them accepting the proposition. A second letter was sent out by Mr. Seward, naming the countries that had accepted, and proposing that the conference should assemble in the following May, 1863, in Paris. To that the countries adhered, and several additional countries, from whom answers had not been received, subsequently adhered.

The conference met, according to the arrangement, with fourteen governments represented, as follows: Great Britain, whose commissioners were Mr. Rowland Hill, son of the famous Sir Rowland Hill, the author of the bill providing for penny postage in the United Kingdom, and Mr. Edgar, French, represented by M. Vandal, director general of the French post department, and president of the conference; M. Maunin and M. Desenne, Prussians, by Herr Metzner, one of the officials from the government postal service, Italy, by M. Pagni and M. Agostini, Belgians, by M. Fusiéres and M. Tindt, the Netherlands, by Herr Hottel, who is remembered as a wise and solid man; Austria, by Herr Lovstrand; Switzerland, by M. Kern and M. Jean Renaud; the Hanseatic cities by Herr Rosling; Portugal by Senhor de Azevedo, Spain, by Count de Tasio, Denmark, by M. Levy and M. Sick; the Sandwich Islands, by Sir John Bowering; Costa Rica, by M. de Lucy, and the United States, by Mr. Kasson and Mr. Mohle, whom Mr. Kasson took with him because of his knowledge of foreign languages and foreign methods.

The conference took up the proposition of reform, submitted by the United States, and adopted some thirty odd rules governing international postal relations, which were recommended for incorporation in all subsequent postal treaties, as the basis of that class of conventions regulating international postal intercourse. Under the new system international postal accounts were to be abolished, and each country to give foreign mails transit across its territory without charge, the neutrality of the arrangement affording ample compensation. As a rule, every letter receives an answer, and each country would retain the pre-payment upon the correspondence transmitted, thus financial profit would be substantially equalized. Previous to this congress different standards of weights as well as of postage in different countries had been in vogue. It was desired to have uniform weights, and the rule of 15 grammes, very nearly the equivalent of half an ounce, was adopted as a unit, instead of the local units employed in different countries, which was a very important simplification, and prepayment was to be required on all printed matter. Many other regulations of detail were adopted at the conference.

As the author of the conference Mr. Kasson took a leading part in all the deliberations, and so won the regard, esteem and approbation of his colleagues that before the close of the conference the Swiss commissioner, speaking for the entire congress, said: "If the deliberations of the conference have led to results from which a favorable influence upon future postal treaties may

be expected, these results are largely due to the liberal and conciliatory spirit constantly shown during the deliberations by the delegates of the government which took the initiative."

At the conclusion of the conference Mr. Kasson proceeded to different capitals, making treaties upon the new basis with six or seven of the European governments in order to put the rules of uniformity into practice at once.

Upon Mr. Kasson's return to the United States many changes took place in the Postoffice Department; he becoming a member of the Thirty-seventh Congress, and Postmaster General Blair giving place to Governor Denison, of Ohio, further progress in this direction was accordingly delayed, and it was not until 1867, upon his retirement from Congress that Mr. Kasson was again sent abroad to make further postal treaties in the same direction.

The Prussian and Netherlands postoffice department took an active interest in these reforms, and no man more than the late Dr. Von Stephan, of Berlin, to whom Germany owes its present admirable system. Dr. Von Stephan had had experience in simplifying the postal system of the different kingdoms and principalities of Germany, and appreciated the need of uniform and international postal laws. It was owing to him more than to any other postal authority that a re-assembling of the international postal conference was secured and the ideas of the first conference gradually perfected in the form of a postal union, where, so to speak, one treaty was prepared embracing the common principles to which all nations might successively adhere. In the development of the ideas of uniformity and simplicity identical treaties were to be made between successive postal conferences.

In the four congresses that followed the Paris conference—that of 1874, at Bern, of 1878, at Paris; of 1885, at Lisbon, and of 1891, at Vienna—the system has been perfected to its present stage, where all nations accepting the modern principles of civilization have adopted the one standard. It is impossible for the contemporaries of a great movement to judge of it. Its effect upon history can only be determined by posterity, but it is not to be doubted that no movement of the century has been more useful in advancing the principles of Christian civilization and of promoting universal peace than these postal reforms, which have put the postal matters of the world on the simplest basis and made international correspondence as facile as the exchanging of letters in the same town was fifty years ago.

Mr. Kasson, who has served his Government in the lower house, in the postoffice department and as minister to Austria and Germany, is still living in Washington in a spacious house in I street, opposite the mansion made historical by the French revolution and the Whitties, who lived in it during their official careers at the Capital. He occupies himself with literary pursuits, the character of which can be readily determined from his library, which is richly stocked with books relating to the history of the United States, especially during and since the war, and from the pictures of the statesmen that hang on the walls.

Over his desk is a photograph of the members of the first postal congress, a rare souvenir, which he treasures, as perhaps nothing in his whole official career gives Mr. Kasson so much satisfaction as his connection with the postal service of the country, and his instrumentality in instituting international postal reforms. His private affairs, however, prevented him from accepting the presidency of the postal congress now in session, which position was offered to him by the President.

Mr. Kasson's is a most engaging personality. He is responsive and genial, and has that old-fashioned courtesy of manner so delightful, and so rarely met in these end-of-the-century days. His culture, his broad and liberal mind, his wide and comprehensive knowledge of his own times, in which he has played a conspicuous part, or better understood place in history. Gout is his only enemy, to rid himself of which he will visit the baths of Gastein, in the Austrian Tyrol, this summer. CHARLOTTE M. CONGER.

OFF ON THEIR MISSION.

Messrs. Stevenson, Wolcott and Paine Sail for Europe.

New York, May 8.—On the steamer La Touraine, which sailed this morning for Havre, were Messrs. Stevenson, Wolcott and Paine, the bimillennial commission appointed by President McKinley in compliance with a resolution passed by Congress, instructing the President to send a commission abroad to confer with the European governments and endeavor to secure their consent to come into international conference on the question of the exchange of gold and silver.

Gen. Stevenson said that the commission's plans were not as yet in definite shape. The commission had, however, he said, decided to visit Paris first and consult with the prominent government officials there. Then they would go to Berlin to meet the representatives of the German empire, after which England would be visited. Consultation with other governments depended upon the success met in the three countries mentioned.

The commissioners have no positive powers. They will report from time to time to the home Government, and their action will be subject to constant advice and instructions from Washington. Gen. Stevenson said that they had already received assurances of support in their mission from men high in authority in the governments of Great Britain, France and Germany.

Commander Whiting's Denial. San Francisco, May 8.—Commander W. H. Whiting, of the United States Navy, who is in command of the Port Orchard coal-arrived from the North yesterday with his wife and children. When seen last night Commander Whiting denied the story recently published concerning the rumored sinking of the dry dock under the weight of the battleship Oregon.

Drowned in the C. & O. Canal. Hagerstown, Md., May 8.—Eugene Howard, colored, aged about twenty-five years, was drowned at the lower lock of Two Locks, Washington county, early yesterday. Constable George Mullin summoned a jury of inquest. Witnesses testified that they had seen Howard fall into the canal while going from a canal-boat to the tow-path along a stone wall. Howard informed several boatmen before he was drowned that he lived at Elliott City, Md.

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FUTURE PUBLIC BUILDINGS

Shall We Not Reserve Space for Their Erection.

A SUGGESTION FROM THE WEST

Uncle Sam Rich in Lands Throughout the Country—Owns Too Little at His Capital—Property Which Should Be Condemned and Added to the Park System.

While temporarily here from the West I have had occasion, in a business way, to carefully study the essential features of the Capital City, and have become fascinated, not only with its present manifold attractions, but with its future possibilities. I have naturally viewed everything from the Western standpoint, and in this way have noticed, particularly, an astonishing defect, which, for some unaccountable reason, has not long since been cured by legislation. I refer to the lack of adequate governmental reservations for future public buildings.

In the States and Territories west of the Mississippi River Uncle Sam owns unimproved country lands to the extent of 594,000,000 acres, or 925,000 square miles.

This is an area as great as the combined areas of England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, France, Germany, Italy, Switzerland and the Netherlands.

In Montana alone he owns 71,000,000 acres, an area more than double that of New York State.

For elbow room he has, in the great West, prairies and plains, mountains and valleys.

For breathing spots he has great national parks, such as the Yellowstone, Yosemite, Sequoia and others, with an area greater than the State of Connecticut.

But at his own official home—the Federal City—he owns no available corner, or other lots, suitable for the proposed new department buildings so greatly needed today, to say nothing of the many other governmental buildings that will be needed during the coming century.

According to the official reports of the department officers, there are now needed new and enlarged buildings for the Interior Department, Patent Office, Postoffice Department, Agricultural Department, Hall of Records, National Museum, and for other purposes. This demand for more office room at the Capital City will steadily increase as the nation grows in population, wealth, and power.

It is an astonishing state of affairs—a lack of business foresight, on the part of Uncle Sam, which it is difficult to explain, except on the theory that he has been too busy with other subjects to carefully consider the future needs of the Government in this respect.

It is true he owns a small park area near the center of the city around which most of the present department buildings are clustered. But this area will always be needed for park purposes, such as the Executive grounds, Monument grounds, Botanic Gardens, Smithsonian grounds, etc. With the exception of the enlargement of the Museum on the Smithsonian grounds, it is doubtful if any more public buildings will be allowed on the reservations mentioned. Hence the future buildings of the Government must find room elsewhere.

Fortunately there is around this central park, commonly called the Mall, available private property, part unimproved and the rest with but few buildings of much value, which can be acquired by purchase or condemnation. Most assuredly it is the part of good public and business policy, as well as economy, to make such acquisition before costly improvements are made by the present owners. And the acquisition should be large enough for the needs of the Government during the coming century.

By reference to the accompanying diagram, a clear idea may be obtained of the Mall and its surroundings, and the location of the principal public buildings. The dark or double shading surrounding the Mall represents the available private property which can and should be acquired without further delay for the future use of the Government.

First in order of importance is a comparatively unimproved area of over 200 acres, extending from the State Department and White Lot westward to the river, and northward from the new Postoffice Park to F street. As a site for public buildings it is above the floor line, and, like the south front of the Executive Mansion and State Department, it commands a beautiful view of the new park, the Potomac River, Arlington, etc. With the exception of the new Corcoran Art Gallery which, of course, would remain, and the old observatory grounds which already belong to the Government, all of the rest can easily be secured at comparatively small expense by purchase or condemnation.

Second, an area of over 100 acres south of Pennsylvania avenue, and extending from the Treasury Department to the Capitol. While not as good a building site as the former tract, part of it could

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Third, south of the Mall, between it and Maryland avenue, and extending from the Bureau of Engraving and Printing to the Capitol, are 190 acres more of property not expensively improved, which would make a most convenient site for second-class buildings, such as workshops for the Museum, warehouses for the Department of Agriculture, etc.

The three tracts, with a total of 400 acres, are none too much for the purposes of the Government during its second century.

The objection which will be raised in Congress to a comprehensive improvement of this nature will doubtless be the cry of economy and the condition of the Treasury.

These points are not well taken, for surely it is the part of economy to make the acquisition now, while the lands are comparatively cheap, and before their value is enhanced by costly improvements by the present owners.

The War on Toll-Gates. Carlsbad, Ky., May 8.—Bastards last night demolished two toll-gates in this county, tore down the keepers' houses and would

have hanged the keepers if they could. The raiders addressed notes to each member of the sitting grand jury telling them that if further investigation was made each jurymen would be assassinated. Members of the jury are resigning.

Hugh Wilson Beatty's Will. The will of the late Hugh Wilson Beatty was filed for probate yesterday. It was made in this city November 20, 1889, and in it bequeaths all his real and personal property to his widow, Etta Beatty, to be used by her and for the benefit of her children. She is named as executrix, and is exempt from bonds; and is also appointed guardian of the minor children.

Adding Insult to Injury. A sea captain and a lawyer lived next door to each other. One very windy night the lawyer was reading a book in his study when a terrific gale upstairs started him. Upon investigation he found that a chimney had hurried itself through his roof, doing considerable dam-

age. He discovered it was the sea captain's chimney. Hastening down to his library, he pulled out his law books and hunted up similar cases, devising and scheming how he could secure satisfaction from the detestable captain. While thus engaged a note arrived from his enemy that read as follows: "Sir—if you don't return those bricks at once I will put the matter in the hands of the law."—San Francisco Argonaut.

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We are bent on retiring from business as soon as our stock is disposed of. Reductions are genuine. Goods are the best of their kind and well worth prices originally asked. Housewives, now is the golden opportunity.

25c Ladies' Bubblegum 40-gauge Hose, the best 25c Hose ever offered, 2 pairs for 40c. 25c Gros Grain Suits, in Navy and Gaiety. 44c 75c 28-inch China Silk, in Black, White and Cream. 44c 49c Illuminated Silks. 23c 25c Silks, all kinds. 19c 5c 40-inch wide India Linen. 5c 15c 40-inch wide India Linen. 10c 8c Striped and Plain White Goods. 5c 21-2c Figured Lawn and Damask, latest patterns. 75c 61-2c Challis and Lawn. 40c 12-1c yard-wide Fanele. 40c 12-1c 20-2c Challis and Lawn. 40c 12c Plain Black Satin. 30c 61-2c Best Apron Gingham. 35c 61-2c Outing Flannel and Dunet Flannel. 45c 12-1c Duck, all colors. 75c 8c yard-wide Cotton. 45c 12-1c 20-2c Challis and Lawn. 40c 6c Dressmakers' Cambric. 30c 6c Toweling Crash. 30c 50c Black Mosquito Net, whole piece. 12c 15c full size Pillow Case. 75c 49c full size Sheets. 37c 59c full size Spread. 59c 49c Ladies' Laundered Waists. 25c 1-59 Ladies' Dress Skirts. 93c 89c Ladies' Wrappers. 59c 89c Summer Corsets. 39c 13c Beds, all kinds. 50c 25c Strap Bows, latest styles. 15c Great bargains in Underwear, Gloves, Mitts, Laces and Embroidery.

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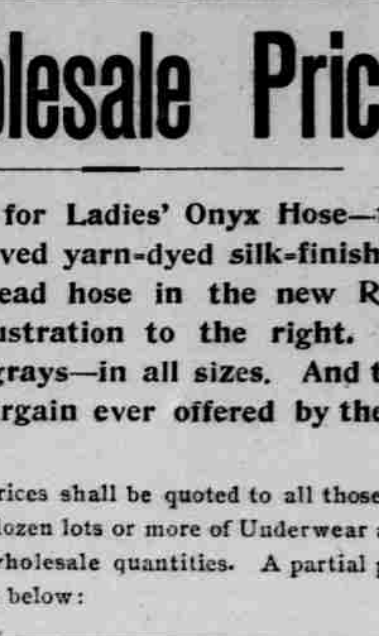
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